British Mountaineering Council

**Reopening Club Huts During COVID-19**

**Considerations for Operators and Users**

**Appendices only**

**Version 1, 23/06/2020**

**Appendix A – Key Considerations Prior to Re-opening**

**Appendix B – Cleaning and Disinfecting Considerations**

**Appendix C – Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidelines**

**Appendix D – Information and Advice for Users**

Provided in Word format for easy adaptation by clubs.

To be used in conjunction with the full guidance.

**Appendix A – Key Considerations Prior to Reopening**

These are some ideas on how hut operators can be in the best position when reopening is permitted.

**A.1 Insurance during and following lockdown**

The huts property insurance policy from Hiscox (the insurer for those huts taking property insurance via Howden) has maximum periods of non-occupancy and the frequency of internal and external checks. This has again been extended for the period of lockdown from the original 30 days (as per insurance schedule) to 90 days and now to 180 days which runs up to 16/09/2020. The requirement to ‘board up’ huts that are unoccupied has been extended correspondingly.

Guidance from the Howden Group is available at this link [[www.thebmc.co.uk/covid19-reopening-huts](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/covid19-reopening-huts)]. Please note that this is general guidance covering clubs in the many sports that Howden insure, and though not all aspects will apply to mountaineering clubs or huts, it highlights a lot of good practice and provides links to further information.

For those with alternative insurance policies, the hut operator will need to contact their insurer.

**A.2 When the hut is allowed to reopen**

The situation is currently different across England, Wales and Scotland with each government setting their own time scales and plans for the easing of the lockdown restrictions. It is likely that the reopening of huts in these three nations will happen at different times, and the extent to which they can open may also vary. It is unlikely that mountain huts will be mentioned specifically; we may need to align with self-catering accommodation with communal facilities.

**A.3 Checking the safety of the hut**

Hut operators will need to ensure that any testing requirements that are now out-of-date (due to not being able to access the hut during lockdown) are now dealt with and tests booked in as soon as reasonably possible with the relevant organisation(s). This includes:

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| * Fire equipment checks
 | * Electric (incl. PAT) checks
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| * Smoke, CO2, etc alarms
 | * Water systems
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| * Gas checks
 | * Heating systems
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**A.4 Maintaining drinking water quality**

Most huts will have been dormant since lockdown restrictions came in to force and consideration is required when reinstating water supplies. Hut operators should be aware of the importance of maintaining a clean and safe drinking water supply with consideration given to potential water-borne diseases such as Legionella. This is especially important with private supplies.

* Further advice is available from the Drinking Water Inspectorate [www.dwi.gov.uk](http://www.dwi.gov.uk) and within this letter from the DWI [www.thebmc.co.uk/covid19-reopening-huts](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/covid19-reopening-huts)

**A.5 Preopening Clean & Modifications**

Huts that have been closed for a number of months should present no C-19 risk from pre-lockdown, but may have become dusty. They may also have been left in a hurry, and at a time when cleaning was less thorough. Give the hut a thorough ‘spring clean’; de-clutter and remove any non-essential items to reduce what needs to be cleaned and disinfected subsequently. Remember that once someone enters the property risk of infection returns to the hut.

Carry out a C-19 Risk Assessment, produce a corresponding method statement to mitigate the risks, and carry out any modifications that this process identifies as required. Install any signage or other markings that will reinforce distancing requirements.

**Appendix B – Cleaning and Disinfecting Considerations**

**B.1 Why cleaning of huts is more important than ever:**

Cleanliness has now got to be a priority for hut users - it’s critical as we all aim to reduce the spread of infection. It is possible for someone to contract C-19 by touching a contaminated surface—like a doorknob or light switch—and the virus may live on some surfaces for [several hours or even days](https://coronavirusexplained.ukri.org/en/article/pub0008/). That’s why it’s essential to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces often.

**B.2 The difference between disinfecting and cleaning:**

When it comes to preventing the spread of viruses and bacteria it helps to understand the difference between cleaning and disinfecting. Cleaning is the act of removing germs, dirt, and impurities (like when you use a soapy sponge to wipe off a visibly dirty counter or stovetop). Disinfecting is when you use chemicals to kill germs and bacteria (like spraying with a disinfectant bleach solution). By cleaning then disinfecting, you can lower the risk of infection.

**B.3 What cleaning programme needs to be undertaken by hut operators:**

The type of cleaning programme needed will depend on the frequency of bookings:

* If the hut operator choses to allow a minimum of 72 hours between each booking then cleansing by the hut operator is not required between bookings.
* If the decision is that bookings will be allowed more frequently than 72 hours then the hut operator will need to arrange for a cleaning regime between each booking. See Appendix C.
* It is recommended that a thorough clean and disinfection is undertaken by the hut operator prior to the hut being reopened.

**B.4 Suitable products:**

Check that the products provided in the hut are suitable for killing the virus. If existing products are not suitable, then alternatives will need to be provided. Consider whether additional cleaning implements, such as cloths, need to be provided. Additional disinfecting may be required in communal areas and therefore appropriate products, such as hand sanitiser gel, may need to be provided.

For those huts with septic tanks, check that the disinfectant that will kill the ‘bad bugs’ in the hut are not also going to inadvertently kill the ‘good bugs’ in your septic tank. Whatever approach is needed (e.g. minimising the quantity of disinfectant that enters drains), be especially clear on this to users.

Many huts provide baskets for hut users to leave used tea towels and cloths in for the hut operator to wash. Consider providing bags that can be closed by the hut user prior to departure, or ask hut users to provide their own tea towels and cleaning cloths, or only provide disposable wipes (bio-degradable where possible).

**B.5 Telling hut users about your cleaning routine**

When taking hut bookings provide information on the additional steps you are taking to reduce the spread of infection. It’s a good idea to mention your cleaning routine in your listing description. If you do, please be careful about the words you choose—while it’s okay to say that you’re taking extra care to disinfect your space due to C-19, you can’t make unsubstantiated claims, like calling your space “COVID-free-”.

Remind hut users to clean and disinfect the hut at the end of their stay, and to keep it clean during their stay with specific consideration to hard surfaces. A list of items to be cleaned and disinfected is detailed in C13.

**B.6 Helping hut users protect themselves:**

Like you, many hut users will want to take extra steps to reduce their risk of infection. You can help encourage social distancing by implementing specific signage and informing users when making a hut booking.

To help hut users maintain a higher standard of cleanliness and hygiene, make sure your hut is well-stocked with items such as hand soap, paper towels and toilet paper. Hut operators may also wish to install hand sanitiser dispensers (e.g. near to entrances and high use areas such as kitchens).

**B.7 Disposing of refuse and recycling:**

Items for refuse or recycling should be disposed of in the bins provided at the hut, or removed by the users. Any refuse, including disposable wipes, should be bagged in a bin bag and securely tied before placing in the bin for collection.

Advice on protecting refuse collectors appears to be to bag all waste associated with disinfecting, and ensure that at least 72 hours has passed before it is collected. Depending on the days of hut usage and days for refuse collection, a segregation and/or ‘dispose after X date’ labelling may be needed, so that some waste is not collected until the next visit. The alternative approach of treating waste associated with disinfection as clinical waste is likely to be prohibitively expensive and impractical, as the infrastructure to collect and deal with clinical waste may not exist in remote mountain areas.

**B.8 A positive C-19 test:**

If a hut user tests positive while staying at the hut, or within 72 hours of departing the hut, then a deeper clean may be required. Follow Government advice on the steps to take: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings)

**Appendix C – Cleaning & Disinfecting Guidelines**

Research suggests that the virus can live up to 72 hours on certain surfaces. Where hut users are permitted to stay in the hut with less than 72 hours between bookings, hut operators are advised to follow these guidelines, adjusted to suit each hut. It may be necessary for some huts to have a cleaning operative or hut warden.

**C.1 Wear protective gear while you clean.** Personal protective items like disposable gloves, aprons or gowns, and facial coverings (such as homemade or purchased masks) can provide additional protection. Make sure to wash your hands immediately after removing gloves.

**C.2 Ventilate rooms before you clean.** Opening outside doors and windows and using ventilation fans (if available) to increase air circulation in the hut before beginning to clean and disinfect.

**C.3 Wash your hands thoroughly before and after each cleaning.** Use soap and water, and wash for at least 20 seconds. If that’s not possible, use a hand sanitiser containing at least 60% alcohol.

**C.4 Be aware of the ignition risk of high-alcohol cleaners**. Do not smoke whilst cleaning, or clean next to naked flames. Take particular care whilst cleaning near parts of kitchens that are in use, and keep containers of high-alcohol cleaning fluid stored out of direct sunlight and used away from naked flames – at least one explosion has occurred already.

**C.5 Clean, then disinfect.** Use detergent or soap and water to remove dirt, grease, dust, and germs. Once the surface is clean, spray with a disinfectant. Let it stand for a few minutes, then wipe—and if you’re not using paper towels or disposable wipes, it’s best to use a new cleaning cloth for each booking.

**C.6 Avoid touching your face while cleaning.** To prevent the spread of germs, it is recommended to not touch your face, nose, and eyes with unwashed hands—so pay extra attention when cleaning.

**C.7** **Use the right disinfectant.** Most common household disinfectants as well as cleaning solutions with diluted household bleach or at least 70% alcohol are believed to be effective against coronavirus. Check that the products used in the hut will kill viruses. Pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces, like light switches, doorknobs, remote controls.

**C.8 Don’t forget about sofas, mattresses, rugs, drapes and other soft, porous surfaces.** Carefully remove any visible dirt or grime, and then clean with the appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. Hut operators may wish to temporarily remove some items that hold an increased risk, such as pillow and cushions.

**C.9 Wash all linens at the highest heat setting recommended by the manufacturer.** That includes bed sheets, mattress covers. Remember to wear gloves when handling dirty laundry, and take care to avoid shaking laundry, which could increase the spread of germs. This is particularly relevant to huts that provide tea towels or pillowcases.

**C.10 Empty the vacuum cleaner after every cleaning.** You should wipe down the vacuum cleaner with disinfectant.

**C.11 Dispose of or wash your cleaning supplies.** If you’re using paper towels, disinfectant wipes, and other disposable cleaning supplies, take the rubbish out after you’re done (see also B7). If you’re using cleaning cloths and other reusable products, make sure to place them in a sealed bag until they can be machine-washed at the highest heat setting appropriate for the material.

**C.12 Safely remove any cleaning gear.** When you’ve finished cleaning, immediately remove any protective outerwear like gowns, gloves, or masks with due care, and dispose of them or wash accordingly. Remember to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds afterwards.

If a hut user tests positive while staying at the hut, or within 72 hours of departing the hut, then a deeper clean may be required. Follow Government advice on the steps to take - [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings)

**C.13 Checklist of items to clean and disinfect in the hut**

This will need to be adjusted according to the agreed process for each hut. Operators may to wish to further limit the risk by temporarily removing some of these items from the hut.

Users should clean and disinfect the following items on departure from the hut, and users may wish to provide themselves with further reassurance by also carrying out an optional disinfection on arrival. Also, during a stay when more than one household/bubble is using the same communal facilities it is important that communal surfaces, particularly high-touch hard surfaces such as door handles, light switches, taps and worktops are cleaned and disinfected regularly.

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| **General:*** Doorknobs / door handles
* Surfaces
* Light switches
* Tables
* Hard-backed chairs
* Window sills and window handles
* Thermostats
* Keys
* Rubbish and recycling bins
 | **Bathroom:*** Sinks
* Toilets
* Toilet handles
* Showers
* Shower curtains and doors
* Soap dispensers
* Toilet brushes

**Bedroom/Dormitories:*** Sleeping Mattresses
* Shelves
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| **Kitchen:*** Sinks
* Worktop and table surfaces
* Appliances: oven, kettle, toaster, cooker, microwave, coffee maker, etc. especially knobs and switches
* Condiments: oil, salt and pepper shakers, commonly used spices and containers, etc.
* Kitchenware: cutlery, ceramic mugs, plates, bowls, kids’ plastic-ware, etc.
* Food boxes
 | **Other amenities:*** Games
* Books
* Ornaments
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**Appendix D – Information and Advice for Hut Users**

Hut operators may wish to consider including some or all of the following points for their club members and those wishing to book the hut:

* Those staying in the hut must accept that there are risks inherent with their stay and no guarantees can be provided that the hut will be a coronavirus-free environment. Requests to stay at the hut denote acceptance of that risk.
* Those at higher risk of C-19 may wish to consider whether staying in a hut is appropriate for them, or they may wish to take further steps, such as providing their own bed linen (sheets, pillows) and personal crockery, cutlery and cooking utensils.
* To manage occupancy, operators may restrict use of the hut and grounds to individuals or groups who have booked in advance.
* Only one group/booking allowed in the hut at any one time.
* A reduced maximum may be allowed to be in or stay in the hut at any time.
* Only one household group or social bubble may stay in a bedroom / dormitory.
* Anyone presenting any of the recognised symptoms of C-19 must not use the hut.
* Anyone developing symptoms while at the hut or immediately after must contact the meet organiser and hut booking secretary.
* Groups booking the hut will be expected to hold the contact details of all those staying at the hut for track and trace purposes.
* There is greater expectation that hut users will keep the hut clean during their stay, particularly shared surfaces.
* Hut users should clean and disinfect kitchen utensils, cutlery and crockery before the first use at the start of their stay.
* Hut users will clean and disinfect the hut at the end of their stay.
* Hut users may wish to provide their own antiseptic wipes to clean door handles, key safes or other hard surfaces on arrival and during their stay as an extra precaution.
* A minimum of 72 hours will be observed between bookings. The hut will therefore only be available for bookings between Thursdays at 4p.m. and Monday at 12 noon, or between Monday evening and Friday morning if unoccupied on for 72 hours before and after.
* Hut users should provide their own pillows, pillow cases, t-towels, dish cloths and hand towels. These must be removed by the user at the end of their stay.